

General: I now welcome your questions. Or we'll just, whatever. I mean I'll just take open questions or we can go around.

General: Yes sir?

***Guest:** Since I'm the first one to make a question I'd like to thank the previous team for good cooperation and hope that we have cooperation with the next team as well.*

General: For everyone the team he refers to is the Public Affairs team. The main part of the task force though, which includes myself, not changing out.

***Guest:** My question is - a few days ago a group of 50 families, Albanian families, wanted to return to their homes in Gornja Batina but there were reactions from Serb population there. It was promised to them that they will return on May 22 - actually will they return on May 22nd in their homes?*

General: Was I said earlier it is an individual right to return. I don't think anyone denies that - and I expect if that's those people's desire to return then I will expect them to return when they say they will. – I know that you're from Radio Frazi and just to comment about Frazi I think it's interesting that a lot of work is going on right now between the President and the missing assembly to have IDP returns back to Yuros of De Farizi. – And Serb IDPs from Dishcrepsy Manipultalities are very much involved in that process.

Last year, in this region, we had 700 returns in the Gulan region, most in Kosovo. – And as I said on my opening statement already this year we’ve had 200 returns and those are minority returns. – And under the US Directions of those returns we certainly encourage it. – Next question...here.

***Guest:** Mr. General how do you comment on the statement s of Nebojsa Cobic - When he says that Shefket Musliu is being trained for some type of army in Camp Bondsteel.*

General: I saw that statement and I’ll just tell you that categorically that is not correct. – And just a word about detention - under the authority of UN resolution 1244 KFOR has the authority to detain. – Those detentions are based on information that we develop and that we receive through our own intelligence capability. – We detain people that we think are an immediate threat to safe and safety and security, an immediate threat to you and to your children. – And we take this responsibility detention very seriously. – Next question...sir.

***Guest:** I would add with the first question made by Riton, I would add something to the question. – 2 days ago, in Frazi, we had a meeting between Serbs and Albanians. – In which meeting the Serbs have continued to stay to their statements that they continue to live in Serbia. – And in front of the large number of Albanians who press the will to meet with them – they declare that Kosovo is Serbia. – What is your belief that through these types of statements the return will be more difficult or easier to be made?*

General: There clearly are challenges within Kosovo to returns and to relations within the different communities. – I think in some areas fear still exist. – But I was here in 2001 – and the success that

we're seeing, the small number of returns we're seeing now and the progress in the communities we're seeing now, we didn't see 2 or 3 years ago. – And they're signs of optimism, and I'm an optimist. – Next question...

***Guest:** Radio TV 21 – Mr. General we know that all the Serbs are not terrorist and all of them have not committed crimes. When is the last time that a Serb has been detained in Camp Bondsteel for some type of crime he has committed in the past?*

General: As a general rule we don't talk in terms of who the people we are that we detain. – And frankly we don't, we take a balanced approach. I look at people as good and positive for the community or bad and extremes against the community. – To specifically answer your question I don't have the information, I don't know what the statistics are the last one, but again we try to take a balanced approach and we look at people being, in terms of being either good or bad. – Next question...

***Guest:** In the spite of Cataly Serb forces have killed many citizens – Also intentionally they've burned most of the villages in spite of Cataly and Cataly itself. Do you believe this is the right time to discuss the returns of the IDPs in the something of Cataly?*

General: Well I think the point; the question to be asked is the right of the people to return. – Do people have the right to make the free choice to return to their homes? – And I think the answer from their international community is yes. People have the right to return home. – And comonicha

...(more town names unknown) we see a lot of positive signs. – Next question...I'll take one over here.

Guest: Radio Primira – Mr. General you have appreciated your counterpart, your Russian counterpart, and the 13th Tasking Group - who these days will complete their mission here in Kosovo. – Can you say more about the mis something of calavita which has about 523 square km and is on the border – soldier's from what country will be placed in Camalita and what will happen to the structures where the Russians are placed now?

General: Let me take your second question first with respect to structures. All the structures that the Russians are using now will be turned back through proper procedures to the Kosovo trust agency or the municipality. KFOR will not use any of those structures in the future. – With respect to your first part of your question I remain the commander with responsibility for that municipality. – The KFOR plan is to rotate different nations in for 30 to 45 day periods to be under my command, so a group of soldiers will be under my command and will rotate into Comanitra. – Those soldiers will cover down on all the same task that the Russian soldiers do and there will be no lapse in coverage. – And we've done this in the last 5 or 6 months throughout the sector, Rapid Guardian I had a US company in Comanitra, I had a British battalion in Batina, in April, and a Norwegian Battalion in Galan Manicupality during the month of March. – So I'm very positive on our transition.

Guest: In your opening statement you stated that it is undeniable right for everyone to return to their homes. – And I'm not familiar with anyone who disputes with this principle. – Just to familiarize, I

don't know if you're aware of this, but in the Albanian community there is voice, a collective voice, that says for the Serbs not to return home. – And there is not a collective approval so that's why we don't have returns in places like Korgega. – In other mixed areas. – My question would be – then would these 11 families that return to something, would that be success or a failure to international communities? – And for the 700 hundred returns that you had mentioned we could not find them to interview them. – Maybe it's only on papers. – Thank you.

General: First it's a success and it's a step in the right direction. – In Kamanitra a lot of strides have been made in that multi ethnic municipality. Strides, positive steps. – Where the municipal leadership goes out and welcomes people when they come and go and see visits. – So there are clearly positive steps. – Are there people that put roadblocks up in the communities? Certainly there are, I mentioned that. – With the international community, with the UN in the lead, supports the right of people to return to their homes.

Guest: *General, how much do you think that statements by community leaders and politicians by the UN administration on not solving the problems, actually killings – Also the higher ranking politicians – how they influence – in your attempts for returnees? Not forgotten here also the attitude of the IDPs – and unusually increase on lost days and months of the statements – taking us back five years ago when war started in Kosovo.*

General: Well I deal more closely with the local politicians, and those are the ones that I interface with and the UN Regional Administrator. – And I can tell you that, just for example the municipal president in Comonitra, as one example, but one of many, and are our own Regional Administrator,

Mr. Sentalon, their public comments, their public statements are positive towards returns. - My own statement s here I'm trying to tell you what I see, is the facts on returns. - And what I'm telling you is that they are small steps but they're positive steps, 200 people this year. – And I think it's responsible of all leaders to give the facts but it's in, you know, to show some of these positive steps I think are important. – I don't know if that answered your question but I think it's best, I mean I can tell you what I see in this region and that's where more focus and attention is. – I want to go back over here and then over there.

***Guest:** General do you think that the process of returns of IDPs in your sector would be easier and faster if it would happen as a process simultaneously in all parts of Kosovo, including the northern part of Mitovita?*

General: Your question implies it would have to be some kind of forced return across all of Kosovo, a directed return. – And I think I agree with what has been said in the past by the UN it's got to be an individual choice and individuals have to make that decision when they are ready to return when they feel that it's safe in their own mind to return so I think I will just leave it at that statement, that I think it has to be an individual decision when they return. – Back over to this gentleman.

***Guest:** What are the first results about the murder of _____ from village _____? – What is your comment? – What do you think with this newest incident of this murder do you think it will slow down the returns or maybe will this force people to move out?*

General: Well first I want to extend the sympathy from all the soldiers in the brigade to Mr. ————
———'s family. – I would add that in my opening statement I said my optimism was guarded because we still see criminal acts, of which this clearly was one. – If you go back and look at Batina Municipality 2 or 3 years ago compared to what it is now it is a very different environment. And in my opinion much more safe and secure. – But I realize that even one, even though there has only been one or two very violent acts in Batina in the 7 months that I've been here. – In most parts of the world that's a very low level of violence – But in Kosovo where our democratic process is so fragile and so new even one act of violence is of concern. – With respect to the case the Regional Investigative unit of the UN sib pole and KPS have the lead on the investigation. – And I would refer any specific question on the investigation to them. – I think this gentleman was next...Let me take one or two more questions.

Guest: *General, let's go back again to the ———case – There is a request from Bell Grade to hand him over to the Serbian authorities. – To be sure, what will you do with him? Will you keep him in Bondsteel, you will hand him over to the Civilian Justice in Kosovo, or maybe you will consider possibly handing him over to the Serbian authorities?*

General: Well thank you for the question. – But I will not get into a public debate and public discussion to speculate what might be done in one case or another. – I'll just go back to what I said earlier, that we detain, I'm confident we detain based on information we have and people that we think are a threat to you and your children in Kosovo. –

Guest: *To follow up, very shortly, but did you arrest him the same day when the Serbian authorities issued a warrant though something for him, is there any lead between?*

General: I didn't hear the last part, does it have any...

Guest: Likes?

General: No, we detain people based on our information and our intelligence source, that's what we detain them on, because I have confidence in my own mind, because I take it very seriously those attempts. – I think last question.

Guest: *General, NATO has made statements that they will have great reductions during this year. – Will there be reductions of US troops here in Kosovo during this year? – I have another question. – Do to some information there will be a based opened, a US base opened in Serbia, can you tell us more about this? – something...*

General: Let me just reference the discussion on NATO reductions, as many of you are aware. We did a number; we reduced our forces, our US forces in 2002. – And any reduction we apply against what the mission is, and I'm very comfortable with those decisions and the level of soldiers that I came here with. – I think it would be wrong to speculate what might happen at the end of the year or next year, but I can tell you that the unit that's going to replace us in July is training and there are very similar sides, organizations we're in.

Guest: *After the **Aksh** was proclaimed as a terrorist organization – in the region where you operate, have you found any facts of this organization existing or not?*

General: Well I think that the fact of the **Aksh** we have seen remnants of it, indicators of it in Kosovo. I think those have been well reported. – Certainly the bridge bombing up in the northern part of Kosovo last year, or last month appeared to be by extremist. – And we're vigilant towards extremist because that's a threat to these **flagellant** democracies. – But I'm not going to discuss specific intelligence that we may have picked up or not. – Okay, he didn't have a question. Last question.

Guest: *What is the priority of opening the **ABL** crossing in **Muchybab** when the people that live in that vicinity still afraid of **Serbian Service, or Serbian service** forces that might still damage the people that live in that area?*

General: The crossing points along the **ABL**, I assume you're talking about manning those crossing points, is a responsibility of the border and boundary police. – And so with respect to the timing of it I'd ask you talk to them, however – We regularly patrol the area up around Muchbaba with KFOR soldiers. – Every 2 or 3 days apache helicopters are throughout that sector providing over-watching security. – Children freely go back and forth to school – And so my own assessment I know of no incidents where someone was hurt along Muchibaba. – And we work hard to maintain the security there. – Well thank you all again very much for taking your time here with us in Bondsteel. – Please have a good afternoon and enjoy your meal.